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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Australian and British preservice training programs incorporate child abuse intervention. Australian student teachers complete compulsory training in mandated notification as part of their program. Evaluation of student teachers who completed the training indicated that they highly valued it, though they were confused about who mandated reporters were, categories of child abuse and neglect, and whether or not they had civil immunity if they reported in good faith. Confusion about policies and procedures directly influenced their confidence in identifying and reporting. In the United Kingdom, pressure over performance standards has left the issue of child welfare on hold, though one standard states that qualified teachers should demonstrate a working knowledge and understanding of teachers' legal liabilities and responsibilities. Surveys of student teachers who participated in training with the newly developed Child Protection in Initial Teacher Training Tutor Pack indicated that this course needed to be integrated into, not grafted onto, the main program. Though most students believed teachers had a role in child protection, many expressed anxiety and confusion over the issue, including those who felt confident in their role related to child protection. Students wanted more thorough training on child protection. (Contains 63 references.) (SM)

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A COMPARISON OF PRE-SERVICE TRAINING TO IDENTIFY AND REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

PAPER PRESENTED AT THE
AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AERA)

SEATTLE

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Introduction

Australia and the United Kingdom differ in the reporting laws that govern that certain professionals are obliged by law to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect. In Australia, educators are identified as mandated notifiers, and pre-service teachers are included in the legislation as volunteers working in an educational agency that offers services to children under the age of 18 years. The law dictates that certain mandated professionals must report their suspicions, based on reasonable grounds, to the appropriate reporting authority. Penalties apply for non-compliance and civil liability protects reporters who report in good faith (see appendix a).

The policy framework in England incorporates child abuse intervention as part of a broad range of services for children in need. This is because professionals working with children are not legally required to report suspected cases of abuse to the authorities, but as Baginsky argues the system is one of quasi-mandatory reporting (Baginsky, 2000, p. 1) Considerable legal reform has occurred over the past decade which started with the Children Act 1989 and which specifies that local authorities have the duty to safeguard and promote the upbringing of children by the families under their jurisdiction. They also have responsibility in relation to children in need of preventative services. Schools, as part of the local authority system, thus have this duty devolved to them.

Armed with this knowledge, the two researchers cited here, undertook an evaluation of the current training practices in their respective countries to ascertain to what degree they had been successful in assisting inexperienced and novice student teachers to identify and report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. They report on two different pre-service training programs, compare findings, and highlight issues for future pre-service teacher training courses.

Literature review

For many reasons, it is important for educators to acknowledge the role that they can play in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. This is for legal reasons, for employment purposes, and, more importantly, because of the effects of child abuse and neglect on children in society. McIntyre (1990) offers sound advice to educators:

> Schools must accept responsibility for their abused/neglected students for may reasons: legislation mandates it, professionalism demands it, and empathy for children subjected to cruelty and pain morally and ethically necessitates it (p. 305).

Central to the work of teachers is children's ability to learn and reach their full potential. In the USA, the Department of Health and Human Services (1984) has recognised how abuse may compromise learning:

> Child abuse and neglect are clearly related to learning. Research has indicated that abused and neglected children often demonstrate significant learning problems and below grade-level performance in key academic areas. If schools are truly to teach they can not ignore the reasons why children can not learn. (USA the Department of Health and Human Services, 1984)

Research is now indicating that children and young people who have experienced abuse tend to show impaired cognitive abilities and poor academic achievement. (See, for example, Coster and Garmston, 1989) While there has been increasing pressure on schools to raise children's academic achievement little attention has been paid to the school's role in meeting the needs of children who have experienced abuse. It is evident that a child who feels threatened in any way is unlikely to be able to engage fully in cognitive activities.

McIntyre (1990) makes it clear that educators care a great deal about students and want to help them. But he stresses that teachers' 'fear and lack of knowledge may interfere with accurate identification and increased reporting' (p. 302). Finkelhor and Zellman (1991) examined numerous research studies and concluded that despite mandatory reporting and training in the USA, many cases of maltreatment still went unreported. In fact, the National Centre for Child Abuse Prevention Research (1989) carried out a survey of educators and found that 'lack of sufficient knowledge on how to detect and report cases of child abuse and neglect' was the most cited reason given by the respondents when asked about potential barriers to reporting. Besharov (1990) also identified failure to report amongst professionals and the reasons he proposed for this included:

- lack of clarity about which designated authority to give reports
- lack of understanding as to what constitutes a suspected child abuse when serious injury may not be present
- a reluctance to report because of the possibility of court appearance or fear of repercussions
- a belief that they can best help the family to resolve the problems (p. 38).

McCallum (2000) has noted that despite the legal mandate to report, which exists in Australia, and the preparation of this for all student teachers as well as experienced educators, there is a considerable level of under-reporting. She points to the many reasons given in the literature such as fear of identification of self or victim, fear for personal safety, confusion about the legal position and lack of confidence about identifying or reporting. But she is particularly concerned

by the findings of Abrahams, Casey and Daro (1992) who identified inadequate training as a reason for under-reporting. Despite the fact that studies examining the trends in reporting rates indicate that there are many cases where professionals are aware that children are being abused but that cases go unreported (see Reiniger, Robison and McHugh, 1995), very little has been written about:

- what may constitute effective training
- what factors contribute to effectiveness.

The need to train educators to recognise and report suspected child abuse and neglect is identified in the literature (Levin, 1983; Nightingale and Walker, 1986; Lumsden, 1992) as a key influence in child abuse prevention, and as such, can positively influence teacher reporting. However, little mention is made of the need to train reporters, of specific training requirements, examples of trialed programs, or reference to the fact that training may assist reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Training, as a general issue, is recognised by researchers as a problem for the effectiveness of mandatory reporting implementation (Lumsden, 1992; Kalichman, 1993; Reiniger, Robison and McHugh, 1995; Orelove, Hollahan and Myles, 2000). Levin (1983) and Nightingale and Walker (1986) make specific reference to educators who believe they have had inadequate training for detecting and managing cases of child abuse and neglect. Research conducted (Gilbert, 1997; Coleman, 1995; Bell and Tooman, 1994; Reiniger et al, 1995; Lumsden, 1992) into training effectiveness shows that the 'one off' type training is ineffectual and does not assist notifiers in their role. This is despite the opinion of researchers like Portwood, Grady and Dutton (2000) who suggest that training should have a positive impact on general reporting behaviours.

Reference is made to the need to train some professionals and mandated notifiers but little has been written about the training of pre-service teacher educators. Over 20 years ago the Education Commission of the States (1977) concluded that teacher education courses were not providing instruction in the area of child abuse and neglect. There is much that resonates with the rationale given by American teacher educators at that time with the reality found on courses today. The arguments against such preparation were:

- that knowledge in this area is not essential for teaching
- an apparent lack of information on which to base such training
- time is limited on such courses and there is insufficient time to meet the existing requirements.

These findings support the observation that professionals who have recently received their degrees are likely to have had limited training and experience with child abuse and neglect

cases. The literature suggests that this is also the case for experienced educators, regardless of the recency of teacher training, and further substantiates that educators have a dominant role in child abuse and neglect work. The legislation provides educators (including student-teachers) with the mandate to become involved. The success of this role is determined by many factors, but an important one for educators is in their preparation to fulfil this role. Historically, professionals have received little training in recognising and dealing with child maltreatment and have had few resources for managing cases of child abuse and neglect (Kalichman, 1993). This situation is amplified for trainee teaches.

However, in some teacher education programs the acquisition of factually based information on child protection exists. From a professional development point of view this is problematic because the sheer volume of compulsory elements in any one course, together with the other emphases on curriculum knowledge, leaves very little opportunity to devote the time needed to cover child protection curriculum as a separate entity. Not only does knowledge have to be transmitted, but people's assumptions and misconceptions need also to be challenged. Additionally, there is a often a lack of suitably trained or available staff, and outsourcing to appropriate people is a costly exercise for any institution offering higher education in the current economic climate. Horns-Marsh (1999) sees this as a concern for those entrusted with preparing the next generation of teachers, saying:

> We can never ensure that school environments are absolutely risk-free for our students, standards for admission to and certification from teacher education programs must be under constant review. We must seek new teachers from the most intelligent and creative segments of society. Academic and professional preparations must be intellectually challenging. (p. 157)

Baginsky (forthcoming) notes that, without experience of the subject of child abuse and neglect, and the opportunity to put what is taught into practical knowledge, acquisition will not become embedded. This implies that what is taught at the pre-service level should be linked to the students' experience on teaching practice, and then to an induction year. University staff, mentors, designated teachers and other professionals need to work together; but to do so they need support and appropriate resources, as well as an awareness of each other's responsibilities and a recognition that one sector cannot work in isolation. The experiences of student teachers' training to report abuse and neglect in Australia and the UK, are explained.

The situation in Australia

In Australia, student teachers must complete compulsory training as a component of their pre-service teacher training program. This assists them to fulfil the role of a mandated notifier. In

South Australia, the State where this study was conducted, student teachers receive this training early in their pre-service teacher training program, before major practicum experiences have been undertaken. Mandated notifiers, through this training, are informed about legal obligations, how to identify indicators of abuse, how to respond to victims of abuse, and how to notify suspected child abuse or neglect.

An evaluation of the mandatory notification training program experienced by teacher education students at The University of South Australia with final year student-teachers, was conducted. This sample of student-teachers had completed the required 6-hour training in the second year of their program. Issues about child protection, the legal responsibilities of teachers', and mandatory notification was absent from course curricula. However, this sample of student teachers were interested in and concerned about child abuse and neglect. This was evidenced by their enrolment in a professional elective entitled 'Child Protection Issues' which was offered for the first time in the last semester of their teaching program in 2000. A questionnaire was completed by all students prior to the commencement of this course. The purpose of this was to ascertain: their knowledge about child abuse and neglect, clarity of the legal requirements for mandated notifiers, and their level of confidence to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect.

Ultimately, the research wanted to find out how much knowledge had been retained from the mandatory notification training they had completed in their second year of the program, if subsequent teaching practicum had influenced their confidence, and if they could recall how to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect to the child protective authorities.

Findings

(1) child abuse and neglect knowledge

Section 11 (1) and (2) of the Children's Protection Act 1993, states that educators are obliged by law to notify the Department for Family and Community Services (renamed Department of Family and Youth Services in 1998) if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties. (Family and Community Services, 1997, p. 25). 67% of the sample could articulate this legal responsibility correctly although some lacked clarity. For example, there was confusion about child safety and that mandatory notification meant teaching children about personal safety, and safe/unsafe environments. It was also thought that is was the training of educators about 'children at risk' and what strategies they should employ to assist these children.

The sample was asked to list the professionals designated as mandated notifiers. Appendix a (Children's protection Act legislation) identifies the following professionals as mandated notifiers. Correct responses from the student teachers are included in parenthesis:

- a medical practitioner [61%]
- a registered or enrolled nurse [25%]
- a dentist [0%]
- a psychologist [3%]
- a member of the police force [56%]
- a probation officer [0%]
- a social worker [47%]
- a teacher in any educational institution (including a kindergarten) [86%]
- an approved family day care provider [42%]
- an employee of, or volunteer in, a government department, agency or instrumentality, or a local government or non government agency, that provides health, welfare, education, childcare or residential services wholly or partly for children [12%]
- a manager whose duties include the direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of services to children [16%]

In addition, the following professionals were listed by the student teachers. These professionals are not legally obliged to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

- Justice of the Peace [3%]
- mandated notifiers [8%]
- pharmacist [3%]
- minister of religion [11%]
- politician [3%]
- judge [3%]
- fire department [3%]
- general public [3%]

And 67% stated that any person could report suspected child abuse and neglect and 30% did not know. The student teachers are unclear about this list of professionals although most acknowledged the role of educators (86%), doctors (61%), and the police (56%). These three groups report most casers of suspected child abuse and neglect in South Australia (McCallum, 2000) The training explicitly refers to four main types of abuse and the student teachers were asked to identify these. Responses were: sexual abuse (50%); physical abuse (64%); emotional

abuse (44%); and neglect (33%). They included additional areas: verbal abuse (11%); mental abuse (14%); psychological abuse (6%); and violence (3%). Although most student teachers could identify the four main types of abuse, there were some who were confused about or did not know the specific types. This could create difficulties for student teachers to identify specific cases of child abuse and neglect.

(2) clarification of the legal role/requirements for educators

The mandatory notification training was rated as 'very important' for 83%, 'important' for 14% and 3% did not respond. The role of the mandated notifier was very clear for 70%. However, the remainder of the students considered their role to include: an awareness of the indicators of abuse; to keep records; to think about child safety; to provide information; to monitor children's behaviour and appearance; to protect children; to ensure children are cared for and treated properly; and, to educate children about personal safety. The role of the mandated notifier was perceived more broadly than what had been taught during the training: to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect to the child protective authorities.

During the required training, mandated notifiers are informed to contact child protective services if they are unsure about their decision to notify. It is explicitly stated that they must not discuss details related to the suspected child abuse with colleagues, senior staff or others. Table 1 shows the student responses to this question. This indicates that student-teachers were unsure who to consult and some were sharing unethically, confidential information to others.

Persons who were consulted	Responses
Child Protective Services	39%
School Principal	31%
Social Worker	8%
Colleague	8%
Mandatory Notification Board	6%
Police	3%

Table 1: Persons who were consulted by student teachers

The legislation informs the mandated notifiers that notifications can be 'suspicion only' and the training insists that abuse does not have to be proven by the notifier to be reportable. 78% agreed but 11% indicated that they had to prove that abuse had occurred for them to make a report. The notification is anonymous and no discussion is to be entered into or referred to the child or their caregivers. 25% of respondents did not know if they should inform the child and/or

caregivers and 6% indicated that they should. The responsibility to notify lies with the mandated notifier. However, 22% stated that you should gain permission from senior staff (ie the principal) at the school and 22% did not know. Mandated notifiers are immune form civil liability if they report in good faith. 30% knew this, 14% disagreed and 56% did not know. Confusion about procedural and legal requirements were evident with this sample of student teachers which has consequences for the implementation of the mandated notifier.

(3) confidence to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect

Levels of knowledge and clarification about legal requirements are two factors that influence student-teacher reporting. Another is the level of confidence of the reporter to identify suspected child abuse and neglect, to decide to report, and to make the notification. Questions related to levels of confidence were sought:

Factors that affect confidence	Levels of confidence		
	Low %	Medium %	High %
Ability to recognise abuse	28	44	28
Personal commitment	6	6	88
Level of understanding of legalities	28	39	33
Knowledge of reporting procedures	41.5	30.5	22
Assurance that agency will respond	33	36	28
Ability to train others	49	25	25

Table 2: Student teacher confidence levels

This research shows that student teachers were highly committed (88%) to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect. However. levels of confidence in their ability to identify child abuse and neglect were lower (44%) and equal responses to this factor were recorded for low (28%) and high (28%) confidence. Confidence levels related to their understanding of the legislation were relatively even with 33% indicating high, 39% medium, and 28% low. Student teacher confidence in knowing the reporting procedures was highest in the low confidence level response (41.5%). Similarly, student teachers did not feel confident to train others about child abuse and neglect (49%). As a group, the student teachers did not feel confident that child protective services would respond to their reports.

Discussion

The findings identified key elements about the effectiveness of mandatory notification training that are consistent with research conducted about other professionals who are mandated to report suspected child abuse and neglect (Lumsden, 1992; Kalichman, 1993; Reiniger, Robison and McHugh, 1995; Orelove, Hollahan and Myles, 2000). Levin (1983) and Nightingale and Walker (1986) make specific reference to teachers' inadequate training for detecting and managing cases of suspected child abuse and neglect. Consequently, training which is recognised as having a role in child abuse and neglect prevention, impacts on the effectiveness of mandatory reporting implementation.

The present study highlights that mandatory notification training is highly valued by the student teachers who also perceived it as an important factor in fulfilling the role of a teacher. However, confusion exists for the student teachers that may impact upon the effectiveness of the mandated role for which they have been trained. These include knowledge about who the mandated reporters are, the designated categories of child abuse and neglect, and whether or not they have civil immunity if they report in good faith. Likewise, some respondents were unclear about key actions related to their role. For example, whether the mandated reporter must prove that abuse has occurred or should they report on suspicion alone, whether they are able to consult with colleagues, and whether they must inform the parent/caregivers of the report. All of these actions were specifically covered in the training that they attended. Such misconceptions may confuse the novice student teacher and influence decisions related to the identification of, and subsequent report of suspected child abuse and neglect to child protective services.

Confusion about policies and procedures has a direct influence on student teacher confidence to identify and report. Less than 25% of the student teachers in the present study felt confident to recognise abuse but the majority were confident and committed to reporting. But there was confusion about the legal understanding associated with reporting and the legislation was not clear. The majority of student teachers indicated a poor response to knowing the procedures about how to report and they also had little faith that the system would respond adequately to reports. Research conducted on the under-reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect (McCallum, 2001; Besharov, 1990; Bavolek, 1983; Coleman, 1995; Silverman, 1987; Sundell, 1997; Wurtele and Schmidt, 1992 and Rodrigues and Sutherland, 1999) records similar findings as reasons why mandated reporters fail to report suspicions. Watts and Laskey (1994) report on research conducted with educators and child care personnel which also supports the above

research. About half of the student teachers in the present study were not confident to train others about mandatory reporting indicating that, in general terms, this group of student teachers had a poor knowledge base about their role.

The findings question the current model that is used to train student teachers to identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect and suggests that there is a need for an alternative child abuse curriculum in pre-service teacher education courses. An example of a framework of child abuse curriculum for pre-service teacher education is reported by Watts and Laskey (1995).

Berson, Berson and Ralston (1998) advocate that:

> The pervasiveness of child abuse necessitates appropriate training of pre-service teachers to fulfil their legal and ethical responsibilities. (p. 333)

Working with the community to develop a model to assist pre-service teachers with child abuse recognition and reporting, they suggest that training programs that present lists of symptoms associated with child abuse and neglect are inadequate, because they do not:

- develop decision-making skills
- encourage appropriate teacher responses, or
- assist teachers to interact effectively

Instead, they suggest that the needs of victimised children can be better served if teacher training institutions create meaningful training experiences with the community, using them as resources and as sources of information, and working in partnership, because:

> By joining forces with other agencies that advocate for young people, teachers may play a critical role in reaffirming the value of children. (p. 333)

However, the current training is not making adequate impact on the knowledge of, and confidence needed, to report. Therefore, the legislation that legally binds student teachers to report, is not being supported. This sample of student teachers welcomed the notion of re-visiting the material because of the gaps that appeared from their training which impacts on their role. The added demands of being novices at teaching and the newness associated with their teaching role further compounded these gaps. It appears that the material needs re-visiting through revision or an update session, that the course be extended, and that there be a consideration of alternative methods to educate student teachers about the legally binding mandatory notification role.

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Evidence to support the exploration of further alternatives has been provided. In addition, we are reminded of the educational and behavioural manifestations associated with child abuse and neglect. Working with abused children requires skill and understanding, empathy and patience (Watts and Laskey, 1995, p. 123). For student teachers, these qualities cannot be achieved through 'one-off' training nor can they be achieved through brief lectures in teaching programs. Springer, Stanne and Donovan (1999) suggest that small group learning is an effective mode to use in undergraduate courses and programs. They are additionally appropriate for potentially sensitive and emotional topics, with the added advantage that topics can be related to practical significance. They suggest that support should exist for more widespread implementation of small group learning at undergraduate level, because:

> Students who learn in small groups generally demonstrate greater academic achievement, express more favourable attitudes toward learning, and persist through courses or programs to a greater extent than their traditionally taught counterparts. (p. 42)

The student teacher responses in these areas highlight inadequacies with the training which are congruent with the difficulties reported in the literature for experienced educators. For this group of student teachers, there had been a two year period since the training. During that time they would have completed three major school teaching practicum experiences and completed other professional studies in their teaching program which do not include material on child protection. This group of student teachers were keen to complete further studies and training in the area to increase awareness of the issues and to increase confidence to identify and report. This is clear evidence that student teachers require additional training and that 'one-off' programs are not sufficient to skill beginning teachers to fulfil the legal mandate. These points are compared with the student teacher training experiences in the UK.

The situation in the UK

In the UK there are two main routes into teaching: one is the undergraduate course where the students take a degree in education, with a great deal of specific subject input, over three or four years. The other route is a postgraduate course. On a typical one-year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course in England and Wales students are expected to spend about two-thirds of the time in schools and one-third in college. This means that postgraduate students preparing to teach in secondary schools spend 24 of the 36 weeks in schools. The art of teaching is said to be disappearing into a set of skills and attributes that can be checked.

This is evidenced by curriculum for courses which have been in place since 1998 for primary courses and 1999 for secondary courses. With this comes increasing pressure on teacher

training institutions to meet performance targets with the threat that borderline establishments will be closed if they fail to improve. Performance is a very public affair with league tables of initial training departments published annually. The fear is that as teacher education becomes permanently 'reframed' as teacher-training, and defined in terms of the attainment of competencies, the complexities required for reflective practice are jeopardised. This is a view that seems to have been confirmed now that the competencies required are centrally decreed. Although it is far from clear how colleges and other providers prove that each of the competencies are achieved. This pressure, along with a plethora of other changes have occurred within the world of education over the past 15 years. This has produced enormous tension for those with responsibility for educating the next generation of teachers. Central to this dilemma is the position of the child within education. It appears that their needs are being jeopardised at the risk of change and rationalisation.

It is against this background of change that the discussion of any preparation of teachers to assume their responsibilities in relation to child protection must be viewed. There is one standard in the new curriculum which relates directly to child protection and this states that:

> ... for all courses, those to be awarded qualified teacher status should, when assessed, demonstrate that they have a working knowledge and understanding of teachers' legal liabilities and responsibilities. (DfEE, 1998)

These liabilities and responsibilities are those specified in Circular 10/95 which was issued by the Department for Education and Employment in 1995 and in *Working Together: a guide to arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children from abuse, 1991* (Home Office et al., 1991).

A survey of higher education and school based initial teacher training (ITT) courses in England and Wales showed that the overwhelming majority were doing something in relation to child protection but in many cases, based on the admission of those involved, its adequacy was open to debate. (Baginsky and Hodgkinson, 1999; Baginsky, 2000a) This survey was completed before these requirements were implemented. Most courses appeared to be meeting the requirements that were subsequently set out in the Circular, but many gave the impression that they were finding it difficult to meet their responsibilities. One third of respondents specifically mentioned the time pressures on ITT courses to fit in every requirement and balanced this against comments about the complex nature of child protection and the near impossibility of adequately covering the subject with student teachers. Other constraints included a lack of clear guidance on what should be covered; and, the lack of relevant expertise within ITT

departments necessitating paying for outside lecturers at a time when funding was barely adequate.

Given the above constraints and the fact that the content of the child protection element varied considerably it is thought that many would welcome some guidance on these issues, as well as relevant materials and even specialist input from other agencies willing to support. Within the Education Programme of NSPCC it was decided to develop a range of appropriate materials which trainers could use with:

- students on initial teacher training courses
- all teaching staff in schools
- all staff in schools
- designated teachers.

It was agreed that, although some of the materials would overlap, specific programmes would be developed for each group. It was also agreed that priority should be given to the production of materials for ITT courses.

The pack (Child Protection in Initial Teacher Training Tutor Pack) was developed during the late Spring/Summer 1999 and given to an Advisory Group for comment. Certain changes were made based on the feedback to the materials from this group. NSPCC decided to pilot the materials on ITT courses. All respondents to the survey were invited to consider participating. Twenty eight courses expressed an interest. In the event 15 courses were involved.[1] The evaluation was conducted throughout England, Northern Ireland and Wales during the last academic year (1999 – 2000). In most cases the course was taught by NSPCC staff but on two courses the teaching staff asked if they could trial it. Two other courses were also followed where there was no NSPCC input, but the evaluation methods were identical. The NSPCC staff who delivered the material usually had an educational background, but on two courses staff with child protection backgrounds were also involved. A total of 1247 students were involved in the project.

The evaluation comprised:

- questionnaires to students – there were usually two questionnaires, one immediately after the input and a second after the next teaching practice
- discussion groups with students (n=25)
- interviews with tutors on all courses involved in the evaluation in any way
- feedback on the materials from all those who had used them

[1] Far more primary courses than secondary courses agreed to what was a very late request so the sample does have a primary bias.

- feedback from experts in the fields of education and child protection both in the UK and overseas
- discussions with, and some feedback from, the teaching unions
- observation of all course involved in the evaluation.

Time constraints only allow an examination of the student responses in this paper.

Findings

Nearly one third of students had some previous child protection training, usually through youth work, summer schemes or previous employment. Apart from two students they all thought that teachers had a role in relation to child protection because of the amount of time which teachers spend with children. They thought teachers were able to get to know children well and observe changes. A few respondents also mentioned that schools are a safe and secure environment, where teachers have a role as trusted adults, where they also have the responsibility to be aware of correct procedures in relation to child protection, and, schools are well positioned to contribute to an inter-agency approach to the well-being of children.

Confidence in role and responsibility in relation to child protection:

At the time of the first questionnaire 59% of students said they were confident in their role and related responsibilities as they pertain to child protection. This rose to 73% by the time they completed their second questionnaire but there was considerable variation between those who had received different types of input. For example,

- 78% of students who had received the DIY course said they were confident - there were no 'second' questionnaires from students from these two courses
- 72% of students who had received the NSPCC input stated that they felt confident. (But there was considerable variation between these courses with the highest confidence rating being 82% and the lowest being 50%.) By the second questionnaire this rose to 84%.
- 40% of students who had received a mixed input said they were confident and this went up to 60% by the second questionnaire
- 39% of students who had received standard inputs said that they did feel confident and those went up to 52% by the second questionnaire.

Student teacher confidence appeared to be due to the courses that they had followed. However, despite the high confidence levels recorded in the questionnaires, there was a significant

number of responses expressing some anxiety and confusion, even amongst those who had indicated that they were confident across all courses. The concerns focused on:

- the sensitivity of the whole subject
- the belief that the reality would be much harder to cope with than they had been led to believe by the course
- the importance of the school's approach and support
- a recognition that the coverage had been very superficial and inadequate preparation
- the failure to deal with the subject in an integrated way throughout the initial teacher training course
- a fear of dealing appropriately with a disclosure

It was evident that many students recognised their responsibilities but were also reflecting on the difficulties that they believed they could face in handling a case of suspected abuse.

Confidence in responding to a child protection concern

The degree of confidence which students said they had in responding to a child protection concern in relation to a child they were teaching was generally higher than their rating of confidence about their role and responsibility.

- 90% of students who received NSPCC's input said they were confident about this at the time of the first questionnaire and this rose to 94% in response to the second questionnaire
- 70% of those on the DIY courses were confident
- 73% of students on the mixed courses were confident about their confidence at the time of the first questionnaire and this rose to 76% in response to the second questionnaire
- 62 % of students on the standard courses were confident at the first questionnaire and this went up to 77% by the time of the second questionnaire.

Many of the comments which students made in relation to their confidence about dealing with concerns focused on the procedures which they would follow and a recognition of the need to seek help and advice from within the school. Some acknowledged that this was a result of the course they had attended. However a number of respondents, with views at every point on the 'confidence spectrum', reflected anxieties and concerns about matching the theory of the course with the reality of classroom practice and some wanted to see more input from teachers who were dealing with these issues. There were also respondents who believed that this 'confidence' would only be effective within a supportive and informed community. It was this group of respondents, drawn from all types of course, who wanted: more input on the ways schools needed to accumulate evidence; to work with other professionals; and, to maintain pressure

when an appropriate response is not made by Social Services. Some respondents wondered how such a level of confidence could be achieved after reasonably short input on the subject.

The questionnaires also explored: understanding of abuse; understanding the effects of abuse; dealing with suspicions and disclosures; and, understanding the roles of other professionals. The pattern was the same with students indicating that they had high levels of confidence, particularly those on NSPCC and DIY courses.

As Howarth and Morrison (1999) point out learner satisfaction, when expressed on an evaluation sheet at the end of a course, can not be used to indicate learning gains. Although the evaluation questionnaires used with the students went beyond merely asking about satisfaction with elements of the courses, it is important to be aware of the limitations. One of the difficulties which the evaluation has exposed is that despite some of the issues which emerged during the observations and which need to be addressed in any subsequent version of the course, they were not picked up by students. This is, of course, the result of many having had very little or no previous experience of child protection. Their lack of prior knowledge also meant that most were not able to judge the input comparatively. But this calls for some caution in placing too much importance on the evaluation. It is vital that the responses to the questionnaires are judged alongside the more detailed and reflective comments made by students in discussion groups.

Some students were very concerned about how they subsequently dealt with a child after a referral had been made and others were interested in the emotional impact of abuse on the child. Both groups wanted more guidance on how to interact with and support these children, and identified this as an area which should receive more attention. They also sought a better understanding of the emotional development of children, how abuse may affect relationships with other children and adults, and its potential impact on their cognitive development.

The biggest concern amongst students in the discussion groups was how they would deal with a disclosure. Some of the concern reflected their feeling that they needed more training and support on how to listen to children, and not just in relation to child protection matters. This was identified on numerous occasions as being either absent from their degree or PGCE courses or dealt with in a very superficial way. However, there was a significant level of concern relating just to disclosures, which was reflected in comments like:

We need more on how to talk to the child and how to deal with it, also how to leave it as she mentioned something about reassuring the child that it is all going to be all right. Do you do that? What if it does not get sorted out, how much to reassure?

And it must relate to the age of the child. Although we were all primary there has to be a big difference between a four-year-old and, say, a street-wise 11 year old.

Although it was usually acknowledged that the theory had been dealt with on the child protection course, there was a great deal of apprehension about having to deal with a child making a disclosure and doing it in such a way that did not jeopardise the subsequent investigation or prosecution. Some students admitted that they were very unsure as to what a 'leading question' was and, indeed, what they were allowed to ask:

I know that they told us never to promise the child something i.e. that you won't tell anyone else or that it will never happen again, but they did not tell us how you then talk to the child.

When you are faced with that all sorts of things are going round in your head and you want to reassure the child without saying the wrong thing.

The suggestion was made in a number of groups that a video on how and how not to deal with a situation would be useful, alongside or instead of role-play. But it was emphasised that any video should reflect a number of scenarios appropriate to the sector in which the students would be working.

Other comments indicated that while students felt they had been given a basic introduction, they needed a better understanding to be effective practitioners. Although they recognised all the impediments that stood in the way of achieving this, such as available time and the complexity of the issues involved, the feedback from a few students was that a little understanding was probably of minimal value. Others wanted a more sophisticated approach to be adopted which did not leave anyone with the impression that it was an area which was black and white or as one student, with experience in school and in a voluntary agency, said:

For society it is not 'abuse' or 'non-abuse' it is what level of 'abuse' do we tolerate? If you give the impression that action follows a concern you will be doing no one a service and that is how it came across. Yes, you may have to persevere but you'll get a response. But the course needs to deal with the range of responses, right from action to perceived inaction.

Another major area of uncertainty focused on the relationship with parents. The students acknowledged that this had been touched on in their courses, but this had not addressed either the fears which some felt or the concern for families expressed by others. Most of the fears

related to dealings with parents after a referral had been made. Although students had been told on the course that it was the role of the designated teacher to make the referral, some thought it would be difficult for them to manage future contacts. They were uncertain about whether or not parents would know of their involvement and some had witnessed aggressive or threatening behaviour from parents while on placements, which heightened their fears. It was certainly an area which many thought needed greater attention on the course.

There were also students who wondered if it was always best to involve an outside agency in resolving a problem which indicated that a family needed support or resources. Some of them remembered the issue being 'touched upon' and that the message was that, in the long run the outcome for the family would be better than if the problem did not remain hidden. This had not always convinced them. Other students thought the issue had not been dealt with or that the course was 'child focused' when it should have been 'family focused' because the well-being of the child could not be dealt with outside the context of the family.

More females participated in the discussion groups than males, and some females commented that their male counterparts had highlighted their perceptions of 'male issues', particularly in relation to vulnerability to false accusations. Both male and female students who took part in the groups felt that unless this issue is acknowledged and dealt with in a balanced way the key messages of the course could be undermined:

The reality is that teachers may be vulnerable to false allegations in some situations. I don't think we should put all the emphasis on children. If the teacher feels vulnerable then there is a problem.

We all know that there may be a small minority of teachers who should not be in the job, but if you have worked in some secondary schools you also know that there are a small minority of students who could easily set a teacher up. This has to be recognised on our training. We need preparation and guidance. And young teachers may be particularly vulnerable.

This often led to discussions about appropriate touching of a child and what constituted appropriate restraint. Most of the participants in the groups acknowledged that these issues had been discussed at some point by the college staff but there remained a considerable level of uncertainty and confusion about the issue of touching. Not all students thought it should be covered in depth during the child protection input, but students did make the connection between the two and wanted the subjects to be dealt with thoroughly at some point:

...but there was nothing on the (ITT) course. The only time it was briefly covered was when one of us asked a question about touching children, as sometimes you want to hug a child. But we are told not to even touch the child, not even to remove their earrings as it can be misconstrued. It is not enough. It is not real.

It was suggested by the student teachers that this issue could be dealt with in an integrated way, allowing it to be linked with child development, how children learn, and how teachers listen and respond to children. Overall the limited time available on ITT courses was a recurrent theme. Tutors responded that a lack of time in teacher education programs could not allow adequate coverage of such issues.

The desire for a better understanding of how Social Services work was raised. Some students expressed negative opinions about Social Services, but they merely wanted to know how decisions were made, particularly under pressure. In some cases this gap in understanding could lead to a reluctance to pass on information. This student's experience was not an isolated one:

In terms of what I perceive as the workings of Social Services you report and they say 'yes we know that family' and then you find out that they have placed the child back in that family. I don't think that sort of thing should happen. Therefore as a teacher I would not feel confident about reporting a case, if Social Services are just going to slap you in the face by putting a child back into a situation you tried to remove them from. It is fingers up to the teacher.

These discussions provide valuable insights on how students viewed the input on child protection, as well as their reactions to wider aspects of their ITT courses. The key messages that emerged from this evaluation are:

- the need for trainers to determine and recognise previous training which students may have received;
- Students wanted more training on how to listen and respond to children in their own courses rather than in the child protection training;
- The child protection training should adopt a more focused approach to the recognition of possible concerns and the reporting of suspicions;
- levels of confidence recorded in the questionnaires were not reflected in the discussions;
- students wanted more input on how to respond to a disclosure and what support was available. The use of role-play or video was suggested as teaching tools that could help;
- students indicated they wanted further training;
- students wanted the training to include concerns expressed by schools;

- students wanted more detailed preparation on how to deal with parents in these situations;
- more training was needed regarding student teacher feelings of vulnerability to accusations from children/students, particularly of male students/teachers;
- more guidance is needed prior to student teachers starting teaching placements. Specifically in reference to child protection, appropriate methods of reporting, and appropriate levels of restraint;
- training to be school-centred and to include the roles and responsibilities of agencies; and,
- information regarding support for student teachers who are involved in child protection cases.

Discussion

There is a great deal of evidence which points to the failure of teacher education to influence practice (for example, Zeichner and Gore, 1990). There is also widespread recognition amongst educationalists that preservice teachers need to be better prepared for the challenges they will face in schools (for example, Fullan, 1991, Brookhart and Freeman, 1992). There is far less agreement about how this should be achieved. There is always an on-going search amongst teacher educators for solutions which will make a real difference to classroom practice. In part this is to address the frequent complaint by trainees and experienced teachers that instruction is too removed from day-to-day experience. Surveys of newly qualified teachers find them commenting on their lack of preparation to face the demands of classroom teaching (for example, Vaughn, Bos and Schumm, 1997). In the Metropolitan Life Survey, quoted by Ashton (1996), 30% of new teachers responded that they did not believe their training had prepared them to teach students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and 15% no longer thought that they would be able to make a difference to the lives of their students. This would indicate that a more focused and responsive approach is required.

One response has been to locate more training within schools. In recent years the amount of time students spend in schools has increased. Although this is unlikely to change in the immediate future there are those who are beginning to question the wisdom of this approach. For a long time there have been those who have been concerned about the pressures to squeeze more and more into the limited time students have in college. But there is also a real concern about the nature of students' experiences in schools. Although it appears evident that to learn to teach you have to do it, there are issues about the support available and the opportunities for students to be able to scaffold their knowledge and experience. In part this is addressed by the use of mentors but the pressures on schools are enormous and how they

manage these pressures determines how much time is available to give students the time they need. Alongside this has to be the recognition that a school placement is a:

> ...powerful environment for shaping and constraining how practice teachers think and act. Many of their patterns of thought and action have become automatic - resistance to reflection or change. (Putnam and Borko, Forthcoming)

The development of knowledge about how children and adults learn has also influenced the debate, although there are many who think it has been sidelined as other priorities have dictated practice. The situation at the present time, according to many of those teaching on ITT courses, is that these theories are at odds with the didactic approach they are being forced to adopt to meet the requirements imposed on them. At one time more attention was focused on how to enable them to develop 'real understanding', but in recent years centrally dictated requirements have had more influence on the ways in which teachers are prepared for the profession.

It has been argued that learning may have to take place outside the setting of the school to allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to experience and reflect (for example, Putnam and Borko, Forthcoming). Those adopting this perspective see the new teacher as being subject to powerful school cultures which overwhelm any teaching philosophies which contradict that culture. Teachers are socialised to the status quo. Whatever the form their preparation takes the most important concern of newly-qualified teachers is that they survive their time in the classroom. There will be pressures to conform to the norms of the school. Students who are unlikely to feel confident about many areas of practice are unlikely to go against the norm adopted within their schools. But the question then arises as to how students learn to integrate what is learnt outside the classroom with practice. It is a debate that needs to inform the approach taken to any part of a preservice course for teachers, including input on child protection. But the conclusion drawn by Analoui (1993) that any training must equip the practitioner to be able to cope with the 'social assault course' should be heeded.

But teachers, like all other beings, hold multiple conflicting theories and explanations of the world (see Roth, 1984). The belief amongst teacher educators is that these are not given time to surface because of the amount of content imposed on students in a short period of time. Brubaker (1970) is just one of many who have suggested that teachers' decisions are a reflection of their belief systems. The consequence is that decisions are not made on the basis of one idea but come out of the integration of numerous ideas and experiences. In order to test the influence of this for pre-service teachers' child protection decision making, as well as Pajares' (1992) assertion that perceptions also influence decision making, Watts (1997) conducted an analysis of these decisions. She found that the child protection decisions which

resulted were more influenced by intuition than an informed rationale and suggested that training should be underpinned by encouraging a better understanding of the influence of intuition on decision making.

According to Kagan (1992) and Munby (1982) pre-service teachers form their beliefs about teaching and learning at an early stage and are very resistant to change. These beliefs then act as a filter for new information in such a way that culturally held beliefs are frequently confirmed rather than confronted (Hollingsworth, 1989; Kagan, 1992). Fullan (1991) wrote:

> The relationships between prior beliefs and program experiences is crucial, complex and not straightforward (p.).

Research on conceptual change shows that misconceptions about teaching and learning which come from past experiences resist change and have to be severely challenged to begin to break them down. Teacher educators have a responsibility to encourage student teachers to be active, confident and progressive thinkers so that they are able to reflect on their practice and make effective and wise judgements.

Even if formal training is seen to have a minor effect when compared with these pre-training experiences. But it is still vitally important that teachers receive experiences and training that expand their understanding of cultures and social problems which impinge on the classroom. The content of teacher education courses must challenge any false preconceptions which students hold about particular groups of students. It must also deal with issues from multicultural and inclusive perspectives. Although these principles are usually adopted by teacher education courses there is very little research on how students develop competency in these areas. McAllister and Irvine (2000) conclude that existing teacher training and professional development models do no adequately develop the type of cross-cultural competence defined by Gudykunst and Kim (1984) or by Bennett (1995). Bennett wrote that racism and all forms of prejudice and discrimination could only be combated through the development of appropriate understanding, attitudes and social action skills.

The dilemma, as Putnam and Borko (Forthcoming) have explained, is whether or not it is possible to provide experiences that maintain what has been learned when it confronts the 'pull' of the school culture. If we are going to prepare teachers to be able to feel confident in dealing with child protection concerns it is important that they are supported by the professional discourses which surround them. Research in the USA and UK indicates that student teachers become progressively more liberal in their attitudes towards education and the ideas they are exposed to whilst they are in University and then shift towards more traditional attitudes after

qualification. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) have argued that many educational conceptions that have been developed during teacher education are subsequently 'washed out' during school placements and professional practice. In the UK Shipman (1968) concluded that even where students expressed reasonably progressive views in questionnaire responses this represented a veneer over traditional perspectives which remained latent throughout their professional training. According to Shipman this 'impression management' enabled students to insulate themselves from the influence of college and was evidence of the low impact of professional training. This has significant implications for professional practice as it may imply students have not internalised training messages and will be quickly absorbed into school cultures.

There is further evidence that theories learnt during a teacher education course do not persist into practice. Research conducted with experienced teachers indicates that there is a strong tendency for them to forget the theory and 'relearn' it once in school. If they do not properly understand the roles of the school and of teachers in relation to child protection and child welfare the chances are that they will abandon whatever they did absorb from the course and accept as reality the beliefs held within the school culture, due not just to a lack of opportunity to reflect but also to the stronger forces of acculturation. Some of the tutors who were interviewed thought that this was a possibility. One went on to say:

There is the sense that a lot of experienced teachers are, in fact, not addressing their fears and values. If they duck issues or do not acknowledge them students are more likely to fall into that way of acting.

There is another dilemma that has to be acknowledged. While there are severe restrictions on the time available for any additional input on initial teacher training courses, the efficacy of 'isolated' workshops or the like is questionable. Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991) looked at 'one-off' workshops which focused on particular initiatives and concluded that they do not work because they do not sustain 'meaningful changes'. Teachers need to be engaged in rigorous examination of practice, set within a range of possible situations which allows for close examination of the subject and reinforcement over time.

The change in role from being a student to being a professional teacher is a complex one. There are changes in the level of responsibility and status. There will also be changes in the inculturalisation. The impact of context can not be estimated. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) have to learn how to balance the staff room 'history' of a child and family alongside their observations and knowledge gained in the classroom. Furthermore they need to be helped to

obtain a better understanding of the cultures of schools and of the conditions which may make practice more difficult. In relation to child protection this has to include a discussion of the reality in schools and social services and the means by which improvement can be achieved. If teachers are to meet the educational needs of children living in difficult circumstances they will need to look beyond the classroom and be encouraged to examine the problems caused by economic inequalities, violence, alienation and neglect, all of which make it difficult for children to learn (see Sikula, 1996). For this to occur across all teacher training would require a fundamental shift, but it is a vital part of an approach geared towards empowering teachers to help children who have been abused or those in need. Greene (1978) acknowledged that neither teacher training institutions nor schools can change the social order but went on to advocate doing something to:

> ...empower some teachers-to-be to reflect upon their own life situations, to speak out in their own voices about the lacks that must be repaired, the possibilities to be acted upon in the name of what they deem decent, humane and just. (Greene, 1978, p.)

Signposts

These two scenarios support the observation that professionals who are involved in teacher education courses or who have recently graduated, are likely to have had limited training and experience with child abuse and neglect cases. The literature (McCallum, 2000) suggests that this is also the case for experienced teachers, regardless of the recency of teacher training, and further substantiates that teachers have a dominant role in child abuse and neglect work. This work is important work for teachers because

> ... teachers are the only group of professionals with whom, by law, the child must remain in contact. (Watts and Laskey, 1995, p. 118)

Although much research on the socialisation of teachers has led to pessimism about the ability of teacher education courses to change practice (See Hoy, 1968; Hoy and Rees, 1977 and Lortie, 1975), there may be cause for optimism that by recognising the pitfalls it may be possible to avoid them.

It is important to recognise that students will have prior conceptions about child abuse and the child protection services. Wubbels (1992) has shown the importance of students' preconceptions about teaching and learning. While they often do not coincide with the theories propagated on teacher education courses, they show a remarkable resilience to change. Students may have their own personal concerns or have encountered particular difficulties. The rationale for studying the subject may not be clear to them or they may not be motivated to study it. If these issues are not addressed the content may be heard but not absorbed, and is

unlikely to influence future practice. Students must feel that they want to learn about the subject before they will engage with the subject matter.

According to Knowles (1972) 'andragogy' or adult learning requires certain factors to be in place. Adults must:

- need to know why they need to learn
- have self-direction and responsibility
- draw on their own experiences
- be ready to learn
- be motivated to learn for real life benefits rather than qualifications
- be motivated to learn for self-satisfaction and self-esteem

Numerous reports have concluded that teachers have low levels of knowledge about abuse. But it is important to heed Briggs' (1986) conclusion that pre-service teachers given a limited course in child protection issues developed a high level of confidence in their ability to recognise and respond to abuse. The danger, as Briggs interpreted it, was that such courses may result in teachers having an over-inflated belief in their own abilities. In personal communication with the author she expressed her other fear that as the content was effectively grafted onto nothing it was lost as quickly as it was gained. Similarly Reiniger, Robison and McHugh (1995) followed up those teaching professionals who had completed a short course as a prerequisite for professional and state licensing procedures. The study found that 69% of cases recognised were not reported to child protection services. Most reports continued to come from the police mental health agencies and hospitals, while only 16% of reports came from teachers and other school personnel. A key issue may be that most teachers will have either no experience or very limited experience of assessing the social dynamics of dysfunctional family systems:

> Some of the behaviours that an abused child may exhibit may be unfamiliar to school personnel who have limited knowledge on which to evaluate such behaviour as indicators of abuse. (Turbett and O'Toole, 1983)

Tite (1993) showed how teachers failed to stick to the definitions of abuse defined by law and as they have been instructed on training programmes. Not only were they including a wide range of behaviours within their definitions, they also persisted in continuing to deal with some cases within the school even where there was a high level of concern. It has already been noted that students form their beliefs about teaching and learning at an early stage so it will take a very well constructed approach to change this.

The intention is not to turn teachers into child protection workers but rather to make sure that they have sufficient understanding and confidence to work with children and enable the school to be an equal partner within a multi-agency approach. A key principle has to be to help the students to learn, not to teach them all that is judged that they should know which will stop them from learning. But the approach which is needed to achieve this will require considerable planning, consultation and imagination.

Finkelhor and Araji (1993) identify several areas that teacher education institutions should address to better equip teacher trainees to respond to child sexual abuse and to teach sexual abuse prevention curricula:

- understanding the basic nature and dynamics of the problem and being able to discuss them in terms comprehensible to children
- knowing how to identify children at high risk for sexual abuse and possible symptoms of such abuse
- knowing how to ask a child sensitively about the possibility that the child has been subjected to abuse
- knowing how to react upon hearing reports of sexual victimisation
- being familiar with resources for referring children who have such experiences
- being able to communicate basic concepts of prevention.

The pressures on all teachers must also be acknowledged. In some circumstances they will have very little time to reflect on practice. Teachers need 'quick and concrete answers' to situations in which they have little time to think (Korthagen, 1995), but these answers must be based on understanding and confidence, not checklists. Pre-service teachers may acquire knowledge of their role and responsibilities in relation to child protection but the encounter with reality will throw up a level of difficulty for which it is very difficult to prepare them. They are taught in a supportive non-confrontational situation where there is a consensus as to values and actions. This may not be the case when they are faced with a real situation and the course needs to address this.

Many teacher educators use case studies to promote reflection, and observational skills to encourage an understanding of classroom complexities. Kleinfeld (1991) suggests the following stages for studying cases:

- spot the issues
- distinguish between immediate crisis and underlying problem
- develop strategy alternatives
- consider potential consequences, others' perspectives and what may be at stake and at risk.

It is an approach which would lend itself to this subject. The value is in allowing students to frame problems, understand the knowledge they are bringing to the scenario and apply alternative courses of action.

Conclusion

The evaluation conducted in the UK, is an attempt to produce something which is as near to good practice as possible, given the constraints which exist, while advocating something better.

At the present time teacher education is inevitably engaged in the transmission of facts and skills. Hopefully it will be possible to devise a course which would empower teachers to play a significant role in the protection of children. But in the long term it may be decided that the most effective way to achieve this requires a rethink of the teacher training curriculum by Government or a very brave approach by higher education institutions to reshape and devise courses which provide an integrated and thorough approach to this subject. Unfortunately, institutions of higher education have been marginalised in teacher education. But it is important to engage them in this debate. There are examples both in Australia and Israel, and possibly in the USA, of longer optional modules being offered alongside the compulsory course. This has been done because it has been recognised that a short course was insufficient preparation for practice. If this approach were adopted, there would be a core of teachers with the potential to make a considerable impact on schools.

But for some the debate has gone far beyond this. Zuniga-Hill and George (1995) address the questions of whether teacher education can restructure itself to work more effectively with schools and how schools and other services can restructure themselves to serve the needs of the clients they have in common. They suggest that one starting point has to be the coming together of students from different professions to examine the needs of children, not just within their professional domains but within families. This model is already adopted on a number of campuses across the USA. The embryo of such practice exists on courses such as Early Childhood and Childhood Studies degree courses.

Perhaps one of the biggest problems is that a course on child protection is grafted on to, and not integrated into, the main body of study. There are dangers in presenting a number of separate courses as if they are not linked or have any relation in practice:

> The hidden curriculum of teacher education tends to communicate a fragmented view of knowledge, both in coursework and in field experiences. Moreover knowledge is given

and unproblematic. Their views of knowledge are likely to become quite problematic as teachers gain experience. (Ben Peretz, 1995)

At a time when the pressures on these courses seem overwhelming it may not appear to be the most appropriate point to suggest an approach which would require fundamental restructuring. However, if the support was available and the content could be woven into the rest of the curriculum, as some students in this study requested, it is more likely that the ideas underpinning child protection would become embedded in students' practice and understanding.

Appendix A

- Legislation: Under Section 11 (1) and (2) of the Children's Protection Act 1993, the following persons are obliged by law to notify the Department for Family and Community Services (renamed Department of Family and Youth Services in 1998) if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child/young person has been abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or in carrying out official duties:
- a medical practitioner
- a registered or enrolled nurse
- a dentist
- a psychologist
- a member of the police force
- a probation officer
- a social worker
- a teacher in any educational institution (including a kindergarten)
- an approved family day care provider

Any other person who is an employee of, or volunteer in, a government department, agency or instrumentality, or a local government or non government agency, that provides health, welfare, education, childcare or residential services wholly or partly for children, being a person who:

- is engaged in the actual delivery of those services to children; or

holds a management position in the relevant organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children. (Family and Community Services, 1997, p. 25).

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